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Comparative Issues of Selection in Europe: The Case of Greece

Dionysios Gouvias
University of Manchester

Abstract

This article deals with inequality of access to higher education in Greece, and especially, the case of the Metropolitan Area of Athens. Specifically, I deal with a general overview of the debates about "selection" in the educational systems of Europe, with special reference to the case of Greece. It is argued here that in those levels of the educational "ladder" where the degree of specialisation and the need for individual selection is insignificant, inequalities exist, but are not profound. On the contrary, in the upper levels, and especially as the time to enter (or to be trained to enter) the labour market comes closer, students' success depends much more on externally assessed examination performance and, therefore, a more rigorous selection process emerges--a process that is decisively influenced by the labour-market requirements and limitations. Finally, an extended examination of the evolution of the Greek school-system and the changes in examination practices, and the relationship between the structure of the school system and the job-market, will be attempted.

General Framework

During the 1950s and 1960s, the study of education-- until then dominated by the traditional "individualistic" values of "excellence" and "merit"--became more closely associated with the social scientific approach. That is not surprising, if one considers the context of education on a global scale, after the Second World War. All disciplines included in the so-called social sciences domain (especially sociology and psychology, and very often economics as well) faced highly controversial problems concerning the consequences of the rapid growth in school enrolment rates that characterized most countries. The enrolment explosion at the secondary school level and expanded admissions to university preparatory schools as well as to the university itself have given rise to questions about the "quality" of students processed through a system of mass education, as compared to an elitist one. In a

selective system, children are allocated to different types of school at early ages by means of organisational differentiation. Also at an early stage in their school careers, grouping practices are employed to spot those who are supposed to be particularly academically oriented.

Nevertheless, selection is not--as has been argued in the past--only about "sorting out" the "ablest" or "academically oriented" pupils. At the same time it is a general social phenomenon, an indispensable aspect of the existence of human societies. From the employment of a job-candidate, to the election of a party- leader, selection procedures are always followed to arrive at a final choice. In that sense, selection is not only unavoidable, but also crucial for every social function. Sociologists since Durkheim's age have concluded that school contributes to the continuity of "social balance", by transmitting to the new generations rules, principles and moral categories, which reflect the society's "views" about what is good and bad, progressive and conservative, and the like. The controversy starts when one questions the legitimacy of those values and principles as serving specific interests of specific social "groups", or "classes", or "layers" of society. In an ideal society, only the inherited abilities of an individual would define his or her position within the social system, and that could start from the very early stages of socialization, including socialization to school. However, many factors other than the ability of the students influence their eventual educational experiences and attainments. These includes differences in the level and quality of education available in the country, region, or community in which they live; differential access to educational facilities according to their social class, religion, race and ethnic origins; differences in the willingness and abilities of their parents and others to provide the financial and psychological support necessary for the maximization of their potential talents.

Theoretical Debate on the Relation Between Assessment and Selection

As Wood (in Gipps and Murphy, 1994, p.40) suggested, the definition of equal opportunities includes: 1) equal life chance, 2) open competition for scarce opportunities, 3) equal cultivation of different capacities and 4) independence of educational attainment from social origins.

However, one could hardly ever argue that all the above aspects of the notion of "equal opportunity" were consistently taken under consideration in the policy- planning process of various European educational systems in the past. In each European country, there have developed different types of examination practices, at national, regional and local levels, based on school or on external assessment, depending on the structural elements of each system, and on the relationship between education and society as a whole.

The move through the centuries, from the monastic discipline of the Middle Ages, to the "refined" and "noble" ideas of "humanism" and "cultivated spirit" during the Enlightenment, and then to the intensely competitive system of hierarchically organized instruction (initiated by the Jesuits in order to adapt their religious purposes to the progressively individualistic social climate of the Industrial Revolution), followed patterns already evident in global societal changes. As Durkheim argued "it is no accident that competition becomes more lively and plays a more substantial role in society as the movement towards individualisation becomes more advanced." (Durkheim [1969], in Karabel & Halsey, 1977, p.105)

Indeed, the "industrialisation" of the western Europe, and the enormous expansion of trade on an international scale, influenced the educational systems by "injecting" into them a more "utilitarian" set of values, and by making them more open to competition, which it was thought would enable the "ablest" to prevail.

The unprecedented changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution had enormous

economic, political and broader social effects. The great mass of people, rising from modest, though rarely very deep, poverty, and the even greater mass of those pressing below them out of the labouring poor into the middle classes, were too numerous to be absorbed. They came to think of themselves increasingly as a "middle class", and not merely as a "middle rank" in society. They claimed rights and power; subsequently, they sought better education for their children. (See Hobsbawm, 1968, pp.79-96) Moreover, on clearly ideological grounds, liberal from the 18th century (like Adam Smith) had been calling for reform in favor of the rising middle classes, and for selection by "merit". Thus, the "fairest" way to select students seemed to be by the introduction of a widespread system of examination and certification, which would be monitored and controlled by various experts bodies at the national or local level.

In other more centralized educational systems, such as those of Russia and France, any kind of school selection was from very early on directly influenced and controlled by the State mechanism. In the former, the move from the Tsarist "impenetrable polity" to the Bolshevik "socialist" regime after the 1917 Revolution, ensured that political manipulation would remain the principal source of change, no matter how great the differences in social philosophy and political goals. (Archer, 1979, pp.284-306) In the latter, the existence of a highly centralized bureaucracy from the time of Napoleon, not only offered the most prestigious professional opportunities, but also affected enormously the "selection" practices, under a nationally homogenous system of organization, supervision and certification. Examination practices--as indeed most of the school practices--were "dictated by the Baccalaureat, circumscribed by the standardised curriculum and supervised by the Conseil de l' Universite and the inspectorate". (ibid., p.307)

Systematic criticism of the "distortive" distinction between success and failure that the examinations produce, started very early in Europe, and it reflected functional, methodological and sociological concerns. The target of that criticism was mainly the "selection" aspect of examinations, and its "side-effects" on the curriculum, the learning processes (i.e. promotion of uncritical memorization) and the psychological development of each individual pupil (i.e. stress and confusion resulting from a strong competitive environment).

As far as the curriculum was concerned, despite the widely accepted principle that the examination content should reflect the curriculum content, there have been numerous examples of the reversed happening in the past. The existence of "subject groups" or "branches of study", of the upper-secondary school in most of the European systems, reveals the "dependence" of the curriculum on the examination requirements. (Polydorides, 1990, p.87) Instead of having examinations assessing the (achievement in a given) curriculum, what happens is that the curriculum is "adopted" to the specific requirements and limits that a certain assessment system imposes, usually as mandatory rules or guidelines.

In a few words, the advantages and disadvantages of the formal assessment systems (school-based or "external"), as they have been identified by the research community (see Broadfoot, 1979; Wood, 1987; Gipps and Murphy, 1994) can be summarised as below:

Advantages

- elimination of the influence of "luck".
- adoption of different assessment procedures for different student "potentials".
- homogeneity of practice, since the assessment is made according to common criteria.
- effective administration of procedures.
- smaller danger of confusion in school level.

Disadvantages

- lack of account of the internal school practices.
- very "narrow" perception of the notion of "adequate school achievement".
- danger of prejudice against certain social and ethnic sub-groups.
- limited "descriptive", and mainly "interpretive" results, and therefore inadequate information for remediation or improvement.

In addition, there have been strong arguments against the more "extreme" face of assessment: the standardized tests. As Wood points out, "the notion of the standard tests a way of offering impartial assessments of course a powerful one, though if there is not equality of educational opportunity preceding the test, then the "fairness" of this approach is called into question" (quoted in Gipps and Murphy, 1994, p.15) One of the concerns expressed frequently by various researchers is that we are unlikely to know that we have provided equal opportunities until we get equal outcomes. But, if equal opportunities relates to not putting obstacles in the way of particular groups, it does not follow necessarily that factors such as interest, diligence, relevant experience, socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic environment will be equal among groups. In other words - and despite a lack of consensus - there seems to be a general understanding that formal "equality of opportunity" is not sufficient to ensure fairness, nor that striving for "equality of outcomes" is sound, since "different groups may indeed have different qualities and abilities and certainly experiences." (Gipps and Murphy, 1994, p.17)

It is these issues that often raise the problem of "bias" and "validity". "Bias" is generally taken to mean that "the assessment is unfair to one particular group or another".(ibid., p.18) Of course this very general definition does not necessarily address the construction of the various standardised tests, but rather it stresses the unsuitability of some tests for specific measurements. In other words, differential performance on a test by different social groups may not be the result of bias in assessment; it might have been caused by real differences in performance among groups, which may in turn be due to differing access to learning or differing life experiences. If one accepts that differences in interest and motivation are considered to be biasing factors, all tests or assessment methods may be said to have a certain amount of bias. Often in the past, American policy makers, under the pressure of "affirmative action" in the last three decades, tried to manipulate test items and devise tests which favored blacks over whites. Certain kinds of problem are being encountered recently by English counterparts, in the latter's attempts to deal with the increasingly controversial issue of "adequately" - and at the same time "fairly" - assessing the performance of ethnic minorities.

"Validity" is closely related to "bias," although it has a more "technical" connotation. It is generally seen as the extent to which an assessment tool - often a standardised test - measures what it claims to measure. In that sense, one can easily have a test which, according to certain criteria ("criterion validation"), may be claimed to be "valid", but at the same time might be claimed inappropriate, or irrelevant, or meaningless, to a certain sub-group of test-takers (lack of "content validity").

Today, in the midst of an international trend towards standardisation of assessment procedures (see for example the research carried out by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement), one overriding fact must not be forgotten: differences in group performance may be due more to the environmental, psycho-social influences that impinge on groups of pupils, or considerably affect the content, administration and scoring of tests, than to any sort of hereditary ability.

School Structures in Europe

Europe today is in the midst of a process of socioeconomic unification in its western regions and a desperate struggle for national identification (as an effect of the late 1980s disintegration) throughout its eastern and south-eastern parts. Despite the fact that one cannot possibly speak of a unified entity under the name "Europe," today), it is of great importance for one to see how selection mechanisms operate in this geographic whole. From the following brief account, I hope that many useful comparisons may be derived between the context in which the Greek educational system developed and currently operates. It is hoped that these comparisons help clarify various elements of the Greek system and serve as a guide for future analyses of it

Unavoidably, we must focus on Western Europe, due to the availability of data and the possible familiarity with some of the relevant educational systems. Moreover, the guiding principles of Western European systems affected to a great extent the decision-making process and the orientation of the Greek educational policies in the last 100 years.

Reform movements in Western European education have gradually gathered momentum throughout the region (Note 1) since the stock-taking days of the immediate post-war period. All countries without exception found themselves faced with the same problems. And these problems all turn on the single fact that the number of children seeking some form of post-primary education has grown out of all proportion to the birth rate during the post-war years. As technology has developed, the need for greater social mobility has been recognised. In addition to a "basic" schooling, linked to primary education provision, it has been commonly held that there must be an "undifferentiated secondary education, with an integrated curriculum to replace the former crazy patchwork of differentiation" (Mallinson, 1980, p.67).

Traditional secondary academic schools might be able to withstand change so long as students were recruited from the same "upper-middle" and "bourgeois" class, but even then as student protests of the late 1960s demonstrated-- the curriculum was also compelled in some measure to conform.

There have been many commonalities in how these systems evolved to the present day. For example, fees in publicly maintained secondary schools - at least for the compulsory part - were abolished, and many independent institutions came to arrangements whereby they also in certain circumstances could provide free secondary education. All post-primary schools which still had continued to function as a reminder of the old "dual system" ("dual" in technical, as well as in social terms) were upgraded to the secondary level. Flexible arrangements-- under national, regional or local initiatives--based on the principle of popular "enlightenment" through liberal studies, have been made in adult education, and measures have been taken for the examination and certification of people who had never before had formal schooling. In response to pressures from industrial and commercial organizations for improved links between the formal educational instruction and the requirements of a demanding working environment, a number of apprenticeship schemes (in-work training, with part-time attendance of a vocational course in school) have been set up. Lastly, examination hurdles formerly placed at the completion of a child's primary school course to decide to what type of secondary education she or he should attend, were swept away. Everybody was to have the right to some kind of secondary education, at least up to the end of compulsory schooling.

Of course, differences between the various systems never ceased to exist in certain key characteristics: the multitude of alternative "paths" after basic schooling, definitions of what constitutes "primary" and "secondary" levels, starting and leaving age for compulsory schooling, possible charging of fees at a certain level of schooling, opportunities for apprenticeships, degree of centralization of control on administration or curriculum policy,

and the like. These issues had to be dealt with in each country individually and as quickly as possible since two major problems arose:

- The post-war baby-boom in combination with the aforementioned influences caused pressing demands for new buildings, teaching materials and enough teachers to deal with the varying needs of the new influx. While in the past, children who had not properly mastered certain "basic skills" by the end of primary school either never sought secondary education or were held back until the skills had been mastered, it was now thought that the "mass" secondary school had to be remedial and make up deficiencies in such skills before any secondary course could be of any worth.
- A very large number of children would abandon school as soon as they reached the compulsory age limit. Therefore, attention should be paid to preparing those children for the world of work.

How the above issues have been dealt with by the various national school systems and how the selection mechanisms have been modified to satisfy the post-war pressures for better schooling (qualitatively and quantitatively) and equal opportunities, will be developed below.

1. The Scandinavian System

The model of schooling in the Scandinavian countries (including Denmark) is characterised by the promotion and, to an impressive extent, implementation of the "comprehensive" ideal. This ideal entails a dynamic approach to the fast-growing needs created by the "triple explosion" of population, of knowledge and of aspirations, which in turn were the results of an "exceptionally rapid urbanization which all too soon revealed how under-developed and uneducated" was the populus during the 1920s and 1930s. (Mallinson, 1980, p.173). Focusing on the Swedish and Danish systems, we may Construct a prototype of the "Scandinavian" school system--although one must be careful not to overgeneralize these observations.

One of the paths created in the Scaninavian system is That in which primary education is linked to lower-secondary in forming a somewhat "unified" and extended nine-year "elementary" school (folkeskole in Denmark). The role of this school is the integration of basic schooling (teaching of "arithmetic/mathematics", native and in the later stages one foreign language, religious education, familiarization with modern literature) with an introduction to vocational studies. (see Elvin, 1981, pp.48-52)

The upper-secondary school, usually starting at 16, is then divided into a general education section (gymnasium) and a vocational education and training path. The former traditionally prepares students for higher education, and the latter qualifies them for work in trade and industry.

Another aspect of this model is that the gymnasium is not the only path to higher education. In Denmark, there is another type of preparatory course for entry to higher education, the "Higher Preparatory Examination" course, which takes two years (the former takes three) and entitles anyone who attended it - even in a county adult center - to participate in the relevant examination. Thus, apart from the traditional way of gaining access to higher education, these reforms (the HF was established in 1966) permitted more mature students "who have already experienced the employment market" to share the opportunity for tertiary education. (Winther-Jensen, in Brock & Tulasiewicz, 1994, p.53)

In Sweden there is no longer a school-leaving examination or test for entry to some form of higher education, since these were all replaced by a certificate (slutbetyg) which lists

the average mark per subject (out of a maximum of 5) attained by the student. As Mallinson informs us, in the early 1980s this reform was followed by an increase in the number of graduates of gymnasium entering some further study (Mallinson, 1980, p.177).

2. The "Benelux" Countries

The structure of the educational systems of these countries is characterised by an influx of interconnected and balanced pathways towards either academic higher education or adequate preparation for working life. The distinction between general and technical or vocational education is rather blurred, since not only the different sub-types of secondary school offer a number of "specialisations" from a very early stage (immediately after the completion of primary school), but also the existence of a kind of "transition" period that enables the administration--as well as the pupils and their families--to choose the "best" way forward.

In Belgium, after the reforms in 1969, secondary education (6 years) was divided into 3 cycles, each of two years' duration. The first cycle constitutes a period of observation, the second a period of orientation and the last a period of specialization.

Entry into a higher education institution is achieved on the basis of a passing-out examination after the completion of a full six-year course and a subsequent special examination in certain subjects. The former is internally administered by the school but controlled by a special jury to ensure uniformity of standards throughout the country (something extremely difficult, given the multilingual, and subsequently multicultural, character of Belgian society). Successful candidates are then awarded their *certificat d'humanités* which confers on them the right to present themselves for an *examen de maturité* in three subjects related to the field of study they wish to pursue at the university.

In the Netherlands, the development of a "pluralistic" system of educational instruction has been striking, because it comprises a multitude of sub-types within each type of educational establishment. More precisely, the pre-university general education is subdivided into four types of secondary school: a) the first, known as VWO, covers the ages 12-18 and consists of three kinds of schools: gymnasium, athenaeum, and the integrated VWO; b) the "senior general secondary education," known as HAVO, covers the ages 12-17, and is primarily designed to prepare pupils for higher vocational education; c) the "junior general secondary education" (MAVO) covers the 12-16 age range, and prepares pupils for the b type; d) finally there is also the "elementary general secondary education" (LAVO), which used to cover the 12-14 age range, but over the years have been absorbed into larger combined schools.

Higher education is itself fragmented into numerous establishments, representing a wide diversity of school types. Thus, while university entry is possible only after completion of the six-year "pre-university" course (VWO), admission to other higher education institutes is based on the successful completion of a cycle of studies in a relevant technical-vocational secondary school, although the students are required (the same applies to Belgium) to "have an adequate knowledge of the basic subjects: mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology" (ibid., p.214).

3. The French System

A tension between the individualist and collectivist strands in French educational ideologies can be traced in the concepts of the famous revolutionary slogan "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity." With the passing of years one could claim that the first two concepts receded in favor of the third.

The 1975 injection (the so-called "Habby Reform") that education "should prepare

children for working life" can be seen in the context of the transformation of France from an agricultural society into one of the most advanced industrial countries in the world.(Note 2) Since the end of the Second World War, but particularly after of the Gaullist government in 1958, a manpower planning approach has influenced the establishment of educational priorities. The growing importance of individual rights justifications for education in the post-war period has been tempered by the priority given to an economic society-centred aim.

Lower secondary schooling (in the form of the college d' enseignement secondaire, or CES) became available to all children in 1959, although there was also a restriction in that the admission to post-primary education was decided on the strength of the primary school records, and on a type of examination by a commission which included parental representation. Strict examinations led (and still do lead) to the upper three-year cycle (class de seconde). Those who succeed in entering this cycle are bound after three years to sit one of the various baccalaureat examinations which lead to university training. Those who fail follow a "short" course of further training. However, one of the major changes in the *lycees* since the 1960s has been that branches of the baccalaureat have been introduced that have a technological orientation alongside the traditional academic course.

Increased participation in higher education has therefore been achieved through the creation of "lower standard" Baccalaureates which have resulted in more of the less academically able students entering higher education courses, which they find too difficult to complete. When they fail, the system provides them with an opportunity to either retake the year or change their course of study; this raises the cost of their education to all stakeholders: the students, their families, employers and the nation as a whole. Formally, selection for higher education has been ruled out but there is already a significant amount of "unacknowledged selection" which takes place at the time of admission and by later examinations to ease the strain on resources, especially within the first two years.

In higher education, reforms after the 1968 social unrest--and the subsequent feverish debates it generated --made bold steps towards a system that could secure more autonomy to universities, reduction of the privileges of certain academic faculties, broadening of studies, and student participation in university government.

Access to the university has been widened to include students from more "disadvantaged" backgrounds. Central allocation of resources has reduced the geographical inequalities found in some other educational systems. Even if someone argued that the position of certain establishments (i.e. the Grandes Ecoles) "has been little threatened by educational reforms" since "the elite of French society was educated outside the mainstream university system" (McLean, in Holmes, 1985, p.91), we should not forget that the prestige of such establishments is being tested everyday in the highly competitive system of a "global market" of higher education services.

4. The German System

Until the beginning of the 1960s, the extension of state activity in the direction of an "active intervention" faced strong opposition in the Federal Republic of Germany so that planning was not then an issue. At the same time, we should not forget that the responsibility for the school system--according to the Basic Law of 1949--does not lie with the federal government. The individual federal states (Laender) are independent in educational and cultural matters.

What strikes the observer of the German system--at least the western part in the pre-unification period--is the emphasis placed on the "manpower" approach to the design of education, i.e., a deep concern for the alignment of the school structure with labour market demands.

However, increasing foreign competition in industrial products, an unprecedented flow of immigration from low-income countries during the last two decades and the shock of unification in 1990--and the enormous costs it has entailed--have caused a crisis not only in the social welfare system of the country, but they have brought into question the effectiveness of the vocational system itself, given the high rate of unemployment (at about 11% in the late 1995). In addition, the employers, hitherto very supportive of the apprenticeship system, started to complain that in the wake of technological change, they would need more less-skilled but flexible workers, able to switch easily from one task to another. (see "The Economist," 6/4/1996, p.23; also 4/5/1996, pp. 11-12 and 21-23).

Admission to universities is made on the basis of the secondary school leaving certificate (*Abitur*), as well as the university-entry examinations (*Hochschulreife*). This system of higher education is highly differentiated. Classical universities compete with colleges of advanced technology and teacher-training colleges, as well as with private universities and technical colleges. There are no tuition fees at German universities or tertiary colleges. Here it must be noted that an increase in the demand for higher education during the 1960s and 1970s caused the creation of 13 new universities, which not only satisfied the public pressure for higher education, but in addition introduced a number of innovative schemes. An example was the creation of an experimental comprehensive school attached to the university of Bielefeld (founded in 1967) in order to serve as a preparatory stage for the first year of university study. (Mallinson, 1980, p.235).

A system relatively similar to Germany's has been developed in Italy, and in Switzerland as well. Especially as far as technico-vocational education is concerned, arrangements have been made to promote a sound basis for large-scale industrial development. (Note 3)

As a result of centrally initiated efforts--albeit with the full co-operation of the regional administrations--technical and vocational education have enjoyed comparatively favoured treatment. Of particular interest is the fact that, as Mallinson (1980) revealed, in the early 1980s from the graduates of the *scuola media* (the four-year compulsory "intermediate" school, following the five-year "elementary" school), 34% enter the five-year *istituto tecnico*, which awards his/her holder with a "mature diploma," enabling him/her to "either go directly to some form of tertiary education at the university level, or to enter into higher grades of management" (p.248). However, we should note that this kind of school--and indeed any other type of higher secondary (non-compulsory) school--charges fees, but the inequalities are not so profound since this handicap can be minimised from the attachment of "equal status" and relatively equal opportunities for access to higher education to all the pathways.

In the Italian model the concept of "higher education" is virtually identical with that of "university." During the last 30 years, the intake of the universities has been increased dramatically. This is due not only to the increased internal demand for higher education (after all, the proportion of the higher secondary school graduates who register in universities remained quite low, at 30%) but also to an impressive inflow of foreign students, who were encouraged by the rather loose criteria for admissions, especially as far as the E.C. citizens are concerned. Thus, the number of students entering university is still increasing at an estimated rate of about 27% between 1986 and 1990. (Brock & Tulasiewicz, 1994, p.172; also UNESCO, Statistical Yearbooks of respective years)

5. The Iberian System

In the educational systems of Spain and Portugal, there are clear boundaries between the different paths of secondary schooling, as well as between the primary and the secondary

level. Basic education in both of these countries is free of charge and compulsory, and lasts for nine years. Secondary education is divided into academic and vocational branches without any interconnection between them. In addition, there are many private schools run mainly by the Church, which-- given the high religious solidarity characterising the Catholics--plays a very important role in the educational policy-making.

Although Spain has a more decentralised administrative structure (it is divided into 17 autonomous communities), one could claim that both of these two countries "designated" the state to ensure the basic unity of education and guarantee equal conditions for all in the exercise of their rights.

In Portugal, university entry is achieved through the leaving-certificate of the general secondary school, whereas in Spain there is a transitional year linking school and university, at the end of which students are evaluated and then a university entrance examination is taken, more commonly known as *Selectividad*. (Brock & Tulasiewicz, 1994, pp.244-246 and 264-265)

The percentage of those gaining access to university education in Portugal is quite small, and far below the European Community average, although there are clear governmental short and long-term objectives for balancing the disparities in the distribution of students in regional institutions, promotion of short-cycle polytechnic education and compensatory measures for the underprivileged students. (ibid., p.246) In Spain the participation rates are far larger (some 78% in 1987/88), although there is a system of university fees, depending on the course.

6. England and Wales

The education system of England and Wales has witnessed many radical changes in the last fifty years, especially in the administration of the schools, the curriculum content in the state-maintained secondary schools and the post-compulsory schooling options. (There are certain features in the administration and structure of the Scottish and Northern-Irish systems that do not justify consideration of the system of the United Kingdom as a whole.)

The entire structure of secondary and post-secondary schooling has been repeatedly revised, and numerous experiments took place during the 1950s and 1960s, either in at the national or local level, and included the state-run (public funded under the administration and supervision of the local authorities) as well as the privately-run establishments. In the whole controversy about the structure of the system, political and ideological claims as contradictory as those for "equality of opportunity," on the one hand and "high standards" on the other, have been presented in the agenda. Initiatives--not always derived from purely educational considerations--have been taken in different places of the country, due to the decentralised nature of the educational decision-making as well as the lack of a nation-wide consensus on what constitutes an appropriate secondary schooling.

From the mid-1960s onwards, the dominant type of secondary school became the so-called comprehensive school, albeit with great variations and, most of all numerous implementation problems. This kind of "integrated" school, which combined elements of traditional academically oriented curriculum as well as vocational instruction, was persistently under attack, especially during the 1970s, when the global economic crisis caused deep concern about the "effectiveness" of the system in a world of undeniable financial stringency.

The introduction of a "National Curriculum" in 1988, created "core" and "foundation" subjects, in relation to which each pupil in state schools would be expected to have a certain amount of "knowledge", "skills" and "understanding" at the end of pre-specified age-related levels (key stages). (See DES, 1988, section 2) At the same time, standardised assessment

practices--under the auspices and encouragement of the central government-- were proposed and tested in various experimental programs all over the country.

As far as the parallel to the general secondary and post-secondary schooling system is concerned, the focus of the state policies has been on the enhancement of further education, which has increasingly been seen as embracing the 14-18 age group. Introduced from the 1970s onwards were the vocational certificates like the GNVQ, the HNC, the HND, and many more, awarded not only by the state and the local authorities but by independent professional bodies as well. In addition, an influx of new schemes such as the Youth Opportunities Program (YOP), the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and the Technical and Vocational Initiative (TVEI) led "to schools being funded from sources with very clear strings of an instrumental and vocational kind, and thus to a shift of emphasis within the education system back to that of the "industrial trainers"" (Kelly, 1990, p.39).

The distinction between the old GCE (General Certificate of Education) O level and the CSE (Certificate of Secondary Education) survived until the 1980s when these two types were integrated into the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) O level, after widespread criticism for inefficiency. However, the GCE A level examinations remained the number one factor affecting university admissions, with new subjects added during the last few years, which quite often constitute an inter-disciplinary approach in the various areas of knowledge. That, in combination with the establishment of new universities (among which there is a number of the former Polytechnics, known in the past as Colleges of Advanced Technology) led to an expansion of higher education, something that is in a reverse direction lately, since the government funding--that covers over 90% of the universities recurrent and capital expenditures--has been dramatically reduced.

General Trends of Selection in Europe

Although there is no single pattern of selection procedures throughout Western Europe--not to mention the former "socialist" countries of Eastern Europe--it is possible to trace in the systems examined above certain characteristics that reveal common elements and mechanisms, which, far from constituting a starting point towards a "policy of harmonisation" (Mallinson, 1980, chap. 10), at least offer a comparative view of the context in which the Greek system develops and of the influences that are being exercised upon its structure.

I shall refer extensively to the Greek educational system; it will be noted, for example, that these systems offer more flexible arrangements in the school life of children, better developed branches of vocational and technical training and wider opportunities for adult and continuous education. This is not to argue that these systems are heading towards a more "democratic" and "equal opportunities" future. Despite politically coloured declarations about "educational provision for everyone" under an environment that "favours the individual's aspiration" and "respects his/her socio- economic background", we must not forget that in a world of global competition and market domination, concepts such as "inequality" and "social justice" give way to the notions of "individual success", "value for money" and "monitoring of standards".

As many international studies have shown, in some countries an "equalisation" among socio-economic strata has emerged, while in others virtual stability is the case. For example, in a comparative study made by Shavit (1989), in countries like Germany, Switzerland and Sweden, the expansion of secondary education has been accompanied by a growing differentiation into academic and vocational tracks or programs. The expansion of vocational, non-college education enabled these systems to incorporate a growing proportion of the lower strata who would complete secondary education but would not be considered

for further academic education. As a consequence, they have witnessed an opening up of secondary education without disturbing the basically exclusive character of higher education (see also Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993, pp.20-22).

The general pattern observed in some of the comparative studies that examined patterns of selection in Europe is that, as successive generations go through the education filter, the proportion of those gaining a place in a level which would have been inconceivable two or three generations before has been considerably increased, especially in the lower socioeconomic strata. The effects of social origins are generally stronger "at the beginning of the educational career and then decline for subsequent educational transitions" (Shavit & Blossfeld, *op.cit.*, p.18). These findings relate more to the so-called "life-course" hypothesis, which states that "if primary and lower secondary education become universal and lead to a decrease in the effect of social origin at these earlier levels, then the effects of social origin on higher grade progression will stay small across cohorts because older pupils are less dependent on the preferences and the economic conditions of their families than younger ones" (*ibid.*, p.9).

Far from suggesting that there has been a drastical reduction in the association between social origins and any of the educational transitions, this presents a trend in highly developed (post)industrial western countries showing that inequalities in the transition stages throughout the various education levels have been progressively more complicated than before. Whereas in the past it was relatively easy to define what the class boundaries were, or which particular types of educational instruction were the more prestigious ones, today influences other than socio-economic status (traditionally measured as the parents', and specifically, the father's occupation) contribute to the opportunities of "success" (a term rather subjective in itself). Such other variables include the "attainment of private tuition classes", the "multiplication of scientific disciplines in higher education", the "changing status that different professions have in a rapidly advanced modern society", the "emergence of new youth cultural stereotypes" etc.

In addition, in countries, such as the Netherlands, or Sweden, the existence of so many vocational paths parallel to the general education network, has offered a widening of opportunities for those hitherto deprived of access to modes of further qualification to enrol in a course with promising future prospects. Some research evidence maintains that there exists a considerable decline in the effect of social origin on educational attainment, in these countries. (Shavit & Blossfeld, *op.cit.*, chap. 5)

But clearly this is not the case in the overall picture of the educational opportunities in Europe. While there has been a slight narrowing in rates of participation, the proportion of students from higher socio-economic backgrounds has not changed radically, especially in higher education, which is the most important (given the opening up of access in the lower levels) level at which to measure the persistency of inequalities. More importantly, when increases are recorded in the participation rates of students from the "disadvantaged social groups", they tend to occur mainly "in the less prestigious programs of the higher education sector".

There are, of course, variations that stem not only from the university admissions policies, but also from the structure and organisation of the secondary school. In systems with a tradition of "open access" to higher education, on the basis of minimum educational qualifications (e.g., France, Germany) the selection procedure starts very early in children's school life with a very elaborate selection mechanism that sorts out progressively the "best performers" in academic education. If one takes into account the financial squeeze of the recent years in these systems, then one realises that in practice the "open system" policy is being progressively replaced by the introduction of a numerous *clausus* provision, which has the effect of making students compete for entry.

In systems where the selection is made on the basis of scholastic achievement (e.g., Sweden, Spain and partly Britain), the selection is made relatively late, and there is also a tendency for standardised and externally administered procedures of assessment. (Christie and Forest, 1981) This approach to selection (reliance solely on performance on an external examination) as a basis for school certification is increasingly being questioned, not only on the ground of its unsuitability for assessing individual needs, interests as well as varied curriculum areas (Ball, 1990; Kelly, 1990), but also its "failure" to change the prevailing pattern, namely, that "those whose fathers were highly educated and had high prestige jobs more often obtained tertiary qualifications". (Kerckhoff and Trott, in Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993, p.151; also Halsey et al., 1980)

On the other hand, a entirely school-based assessment, despite its suitability of involving a wide sampling of student achievements, is not very popular in most of the examined countries, because of comparability problems arising specifically when the results are used for qualification or selection purposes in highly competitive labour markets.

With the above evidence and considerations in mind, it is difficult to distinguish a single selection system, and characterise it as more or less "fair". In response to the needs of the changing workplace, as well as to accommodate the needs of students, curricula contents and school structures are already changing in secondary and tertiary institutions. It will be a daunting task to devise selection procedures that do not have serious negative impact, not only on teaching and learning in schools, but in the social differentiation.

The introduction of modern methods of teaching has not yet brought any significant change to the opportunities for access to higher education. The relatively "open" school environment has remained a "privilege" of the younger age- cohorts at a time when the selection processes, considered as vital in European educational systems-- in contrast to the American system consisting of the "shopping-mall" schools-- preserved their exclusiveness only at or nearly at the end of the secondary school.

Despite the progress so far made in the school systems around the world with the introduction of new practices and modern pedagogical methods based on group-learning principles, really noticeable changes have a long way to go to be adopted, especially in the upper levels of secondary schooling. In other words, although the curricular structure and the pedagogical framework at the lower levels can be quite "elaborated" (to use a "bernsteinian" term), at the upper levels only individual effort and performance are rewarded. That becomes clearer and more decisive at the transition period between secondary and tertiary education. Thus, one could argue that at levels of the educational "ladder" where the degree of specialisation and the need for individual selection are insignificant, collective learning flourishes; on the contrary, at the upper levels, and especially as the time to enter the labour market approaches, the student's success depends entirely on his or her school (and examination) performance, and collective learning disappears.

A number of "technocratic" solutions supported in recent years by policy-makers, either in the direction of "maintaining high standards" (e.g., introduction of numerus clausus policies), or of "comparability" of the various systems (e.g., use of "standardised" testing methods), present selective admissions as a "need" and, most of all, as an objectively assessed procedure, according to universally accepted principles. The role that social factors (such as class interests) play in the definition of a "worthwhile corpus of knowledge" is being continuously undermined.

Selection in Greece

The 1964 reform.

The reforms in examinations and curricula came as a response to the general climate of political freedom and democratic changes, and the feeling that the formal educational system was obsolete and maladjusted in relation to the context of a rapidly changed, and technologically advanced "western world". Not surprisingly, the general system of schooling, especially in its basic levels (primary and secondary) was the first target of the reform policies of the various governments.

Although the most fundamental changes in the system were introduced after the re-establishment of democracy in 1974, the "seeds" for these changes had existed in the mid-sixties, when the liberal party of George Papandreou was in office. Among the changes brought by this government--which attempted in an unfavourable social climate to attack the "classicism", "conservatism" and "intellectualism" of the preceding right-wing governments --the most important were the following:

- free education at all levels of public education
- nine-year compulsory attendance instead of the six-year system existed
- restructuring of secondary schools into three-year gymnasium (lower) and three-year *lyceum* (upper); the latter would include general and technical-vocational types.
- "demotiki", the vernacular, would be the language of instruction in primary schools and taught along with "katharevousa" (a simplified form of ancient Greek) in secondary schools.
- at the end of secondary education the pupils would sit special examinations to get the "academic certificate" that would allow entry to the universities.

As far as the last change is concerned, one can argue that it was actually the first official step towards the introduction of a National Examinations System. In other words, whereas in the past, each higher education institute had been conducting its own entry examinations, now the Ministry of Education was responsible for these examinations at the national level. The examinations for the "academic certificate" (something analogous to the French baccalaureat and the German *abitur*) were to be conducted on specific dates in various cities of the country, based on the subject matter taught in the *lycea* and marked by secondary school teachers, not university professors.

In order for a candidate to get the "academic certificate," he or she had two alternative "types of schools" to choose from. The first one included the so-called "liberal" disciplines (Law, Literature, Theology, Economics, Political Science and Teacher-training Colleges), whereas the second one included "applied" disciplines (Natural Science, Mathematics, Medical Science, Engineering, Architecture, etc.). However, even the latter were affected by the traditional orientation of the whole system, since among the examined subjects were "Ancient Greek", "Modern Greek" and "History", although in the calculation of the final grade they were multiplied by different coefficients than those of the type A subjects.

It was not the first time that a nation-wide educational reform was being attempted. Actually this was the third attempt, in the same century (the previous ones had been made in 1913 and in 1929, both under centre- wing, liberal governments) to insert a new way of thinking into the "conservative" and "classicist" Greek educational structure. The new liaisons between the country and the EEC--from 1961--urged a radical economic restructuring, something that required a equally radical reform of education, which should eventually bear the responsibility to train the necessary work-force. The shift to technical-vocational education was thought capable of creating a multi-leveled network of practically- orientated middle schools that would run parallel to that of the "general" secondary education, enabling Greece to keep pace with the educational systems of the more advanced capitalistic countries. (Bouzakis, 1991:104-105) In addition, measures such as free

education at all levels of public education, nine- years' compulsory attendance, the introduction of demotiki, the improvement of teacher-training, etc., generated a sense of "justice" and "equality", especially in the lower social strata where economic and other reasons prevented the provision even of the most basic forms of education.

The introduction of nine years' compulsory schooling raised considerably the participation rates, especially in secondary education throughout the 1960s. For example, overall participation at the secondary level, from 33% of the relative age group in 1960 went up to 56% in 1970. The corresponding figures for girls' participation showed an even more impressive trend, with an increase from 28% to 54%. (OECD, 1980, p.121) In fact, participation of the female population in general secondary education almost equaled that of males-- with slight regional differences. (See Table 1) One could even argue that, on the one hand, girls were more favoured than boys as far as general education was concerned.

Nevertheless, things were reversed when technical- vocational and higher education were included in the estimates. When this was done, the participation of girls in the former, and of lower socioeconomic strata in the latter, was quite low. Especially in the technical schools, girls' level of participation--although the overall enrolments increased dramatically--remained far below that of boys. In 1975- 76 (10 years after the introduction of the reforms), there were only 6,863 girls registered in upper- secondary (middle) technical schools in a total of 55,503 students (12.3%), and 2,607 in lower technical schools in a total of 60,119 (4.3%). In contrast, their participation in vocational schools was significantly higher (middle level: 7,892 in a total of 16,969, or 46.5%; lower level: 1,168 out of 1,308, or 89.2%). (Ministry of Education, 1975, table 2.101) But again, the relatively high proportion of girls in vocational education may be explained by the fact that this type of education, in contrast to the technical type, leads to occupations which are socially accepted as "women's jobs".

Table 1
Participation of Population aged 16-18
in Upper Secondary Education, by Region and Sex
in 1960-61 and 1970-71

	1960-61		1970-71	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Region Total	30	23.5	35.8	38
Greater Athens	43.9	42.1	38.2	43.8
Rest of Central Greece & Euboea	24.1	15.5	29.8	30
Peloponnesos	31	25.3	36.9	41.9
Ionian Islands	28.5	21	38.8	31.8
Epirus	29.6	11.1	36.2	32.7
Thessaly	23.8	13.4	40.7	38.2
Macedonia	24.8	19	33.1	36.6

Thrace	13.9	11.6	27	23.5
Aegean Islands	27.3	20.4	39.2	32.1
Crete	29.7	24.6	38.1	42.7

(Source: Ministry of Education, Statistics of Education, 1970-71.)

On the other hand, for higher and university education in the 1960s, the over-representation of social groups very high in the occupational ladder was more than obvious. For example, students whose parents were holders of "professional", or "managerial and administrative" jobs had--in relation to the respective occupations" representation in the whole population--on average from two to four times more chances of securing a place than the sons and daughters of the "blue-collar workers" and the "farmers". (OECD, 1980, p.126). Nevertheless, the gap in the opportunities tended to narrow, not only in socioeconomic, but also in gender and geographic terms, as one moves toward the 1970s. (Polydorides, 1995, chap. 5, 13) This was due to the compensatory measures following the 1964 reform, and the greater State intervention in the reorganisation of all levels of education after the delay caused by the seven- year "break" of the dictatorship, as will be discussed now.

Reforms under the "junta" regime

The 1967 "junta" brought to a halt every reform attempt, and reinforced the conservatism of the "traditionalists". Among the counter reform measures of the period 1967-74 were the reduction of compulsory education from 9 to 6 years, the abolition of translated ancient Greek literature texts, and the replacement of social sciences in the new curriculum. The teaching of "demotiki" was restricted to the first 3 grades of the primary school. Secondary education remained "integrated" in the form of the six-year gymnasium. In general, in those years Greek education was more classics-oriented, bookish and old-fashioned than in the previous decade. The most important changes were to be observed in the "hidden curriculum" (Young, 1971) of the schools and the disciplinary environment in which the teaching was taking place. The regime attempted to turn the attention of the pupils towards the values of the past, especially through the emphasis on ancient Greek and its simplified form of school instruction, the katharevousa (i.e.,the pure language).

The paternalistic attitude of the dictators in "saving" education can be seen in the will of the regime to maintain education free of charge at all levels, and to replace the old textbooks with new ones, aiming at imposing the new Helleno-Christian ideals. (Note 4) A quick review of, say, the textbooks of civil education of that period, would reveal feverish (State-guided) attempts to restore--if it ever existed--the self-confidence of the "nation" through the invocation of the old "virtues" of the glorious "helleno-cristianic past", the condemnation of communism, and unquestioning conformism to the formal guidelines.

Nevertheless, it seems that even in the period 1967- 74 there existed a political will--after insistent recommendations by international organisations like the World Bank--for a restructuring of higher education, on the one hand, and a promotion of technical-vocational education in a higher level, on the other. Thus, although there had been a widespread bias against technical and practical studies in the curriculum- orientation of schools, at the same time it started to be realised that there was a lack of balance in the provision of school knowledge. The output of graduates from secondary schools and universities was growing more rapidly than the capacity of the economy to create new jobs,

whereas the output of graduates from technical schools could not meet the shortages in the labour market. It becomes reasonable to assume that the need to increase productivity and improve the overall performance of the economy gradually prevailed over the "liberal" orientation of the Hellenic-Christian tradition.

To argue that big improvements have been brought about however, would be naive. Half the population of the country is concentrated in the Greater Athens area, and as a result increased enrolments as a proportion of the respective area-population represented a very small improvement in real figures.

Moreover, if one takes into account the unsystematic methods of collecting data or keeping school records during that period and the high drop-out rates--especially in the rural areas where the contribution of the younger members of the family in agricultural work was considered essential--then it is easier to see that little improvement was achieved in the reduction of regional differences (Eliou, 1976).

In the technical field, while secondary education was marked by the total reverse of the 1964 reform, a new type of educational-development plan emerged under the auspices of foreign guidelines. It was part of a long- term plan of economic development, called "Model for the Long-term Development of Greece, 1972-1987". The Plan projected the mass movement of the labour force from the primary sector (agriculture) of the economy to the secondary (industry) and the tertiary (commerce, services), and in addition an increase in the graduates of technical-vocational education, from 335,000 in 1971 to 1,600,000 in 1987. (Bouzakis, 1986, p.111)

The flow of internal migration toward the big urban centres--taking place in the last three decades--was not the intended outcome of macro-level manpower planning, but rather the result of the complete absence of regional policies throughout the period examined. Moreover, the distribution of the labour force to the secondary and tertiary sectors has been greatly unequal in favour of the second, which reveals the imbalance that characterises not only the productive base of the Greek economy but also the curriculum content of schools and the attention paid to the technical-vocational education. (Note 5)

It is true that the increase in the enrolment and output ratio of technical education during the 1967-1974 period was of an unprecedented level for Greece. While the output of the six-year gymnasium increased between 1968 and 1974 at a rate of 37.6%, that of the (lower and middle) technical-vocational schools increased at a rate of 78.8%. The graduates of the latter were about 42% of those of the former (15,898 as compared to 37,844) in 1968, but in 1974 the proportion was 58% (28,657 and 49,183, respectively), although it started to fall again in the following years. (OECD, 1980, p.132) Despite the improvements, the importance given to the "hellenic-Christian tradition" and the mainly classics-oriented curriculum of the Greek schools at that period affected not only the content of technical education and the resources allocated to it by the government, but also its "status" in the eyes of the public. (see Drettakis, 1974; Dimaras, 1975; Noutsos, 1978; Nikta, 1991) As a result, secondary technical-vocational education continued to attract that kind of pupils with no hope of having access to "prestigious" occupations, that is those who were expected to "benefit" by a vocationally-oriented educational provision (blue-collar workers, office clerks, farmers, and the like).

Such was also the case with the participation in higher education by different socioeconomic groups. According to OECD calculations, in the years before the 1976-77 reform, participation in higher education was highly unequal with respect to father's occupation. Although the situation from the 1950s to the 1970s had been changed in favour of the "lower" professions, in the mid-1970s there were still wide differences in access to certain university departments. In 1975-76, for example, Humanities was the only field where all occupational categories were represented almost "equally", whereas Law was

"over-represented by professionals and managerial personnel", Social Sciences and Teacher-training were "over-represented by people in agriculture and by blue-collar workers", and the more elite occupations were "concentrated in the more "elite" fields of study, e.g., Medicine". (OECD, 1980:121)

The restructuring of higher education was initiated with the introduction of various "Cycles of Schools" for National Examinations purposes, corresponding to a very "specialised" classification of academic disciplines. (See Figure 1.)

The promotion of technical and vocational education in a higher level was characterised by the establishment - in 1969 - of the "Centres for Technical and Vocational Education", known by the Greek acronym "KATEE". These Centres were created to provide technical education and training for middle-level manpower at the higher technician level, and have been considered as equivalent to the "Community Colleges" in the USA. The major reason of their existence was that they catered for those students "whose initial educational aspirations was a university degree", but "having failed to enter universities, they were obliged to pursue their education elsewhere". (Kalamatianou et al, 1988:272) The first five KATEEs were established in 1974 in Athens, Thessaloniki, Larissa, Patras and Heraclion (Crete), covering 21 faculties with 74 specialised departments.

Figure 1
Examples of Cycles of Schools

Cycles of University Schools	Subjects Examined
A.Literature	Written expression, Ancient Greek, History, Latin
B.Law	Written expression, Ancient Greek, History, Latin
C.Physics-Mathematics	Written expression, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry
•	•
•	•
•	•
H.Economics	Written expression, Mathematics, Geography, History
•	•
•	•
•	•
L.Theology	Written expression, Ancient Greek, History, Latin

The 1976-77 Reform: Main Changes

When democracy was re-introduced in 1974, the climate favoured major political, social and educational reform. The recommendations of international bodies, such as The World Bank and OECD, pointed to the great need to support technical education, while they commented on the great "inequalities" in educational opportunities, prevailing in the 1970s, in relation to gender and socioeconomic status. (see OECD, 1980)

In the new formulation of educational policies, what was sought by the government was no longer the advice of individual Minister- appointees or associates, but rather the

establishment of a body of experts who would formally operate as part of the "managerial" group of the State organisational mechanism. (See Parsons, 1960; Blau and Mayer, 1967) The function of this group was perceived as crucial because, not only the complexity of educational innovation in international level and the example of other European countries, but also the need to achieve consensus in such highly controversial reform attempts, required the participation of experts of as many different scientific disciplines as possible. This was contrary to the past when the School of Philosophy of the University of Athens had been the main agent of policy-planning in school matters. The existence of an anti-reformist alliance-- consisting of MPs belonging to the governing right-wing party, individual university professors, appointees of the dictatorship in the State mechanism, and conservative religious pressure-groups--despite causing a delay in the approval of the reform legislation, did not decisively affect the proposed changes.(see Mattheou, 1980, chap.5)

As a consequence of the new policies, in 1975, the Centre of Educational Studies and In-Service Training (KEME) was established. Its main tasks were defined as: "a) the systematic scientific study and research of educational matters, b) advise on any law draft proposal by the Minister, c) the design of textbooks and timetables and d) the in-service training of teachers". (Nikta, 1991, p.63)

Here it should be remembered that the centralised nature of the administrative structure of the Greek system could not - and indeed did not - allow KEME to be involved in essentially political decision-making procedures. Neither did it leave any doubt about the real influence this body of experts had on the educational goals that each political party in power had already set up according to its own ideological principles and political interests. Although it can be asserted that, after 1974 the "political centre" (Ministry of Education) with its affiliated agents--operating under the financial constraints imposed by the government's budgetary policies--was not any longer "impenetrable" from "external" influences (see Archer, 1979), at the same time there is no doubt that all the initiatives for educational reform have been--actually still are--channelled through various patterns of "political manipulation" occurring between the governing- party elite and the different interest groups.(Mattheou, 1980; Eliou, 1986)

One of the main focuses of the debate at that period was the structure, content and orientation of the pre- university level of general education, and especially the undifferentiated general secondary school. The concern with this stage of schooling was decisively influenced by the progressive integration of Greece into a system of international co-operation, particularly after the construction of closer ties with the European Community, of which Greece would become a full member in 1980.

Under the laws 309/1976 (for general education) and 576/1977 (for technical-vocational), secondary education was split into two independent "cycles": the 3-year comprehensive gymnasium (13-15), and the 3-year selective *lyceum* (16-18). The examinations for passage from primary to secondary school were abolished, and strict examinations at the end of gymnasium were introduced in order to allocate pupils to the new diversified senior high school. Those who performed better in these examinations were accepted into the "prestigious" general *lyceum*, whereas those who performed "poorly" were allocated either to the 3-year technical-vocational *lyceum*, or to the 2-year technical-vocational school.

The curriculum of the general *lyceum* was oriented toward higher education. The subjects taught in the first year of this school were common for every pupil. In the second year there was a distinction between common and optional subjects, the latter leading at the end of the third year to one out of two types of certificate (apolytirion), which corresponded to two different groups of academic disciplines. The old classical and practical directions were reshaped into two groups of selectives: a) ancient Greek, history, Latin; and b)

mathematics, physics and chemistry.

Ancient Greek was the subject that all students had to attend for the most hours every week. The first of the other two alternatives (the one- to two-year technical-vocational school) was of admittedly lower esteem, and it offered mainly a preparation stage for the labour market, after a kind of specialised training. For those studying in this option, the choice was offered--instead of starting work immediately after graduation--to take special examinations in order to gain a place in the second year of the technical- vocational *lyceum*. The latter was formally considered as having the same status as the general *lyceum*, since it was not only meant to prepare students for the labour market, but in addition it allowed the "ablest" of its graduates to enter higher technical education. For that reason a proportion of the entrees in the KATEEs (32%) was allocated to the technical *lyceum* graduates, according to their school achievement. Thus, we see that whereas entry to higher education (universities, teacher-training institutes and KATEEs) was allowed only after examinations at the national level, the government decided to give a small incentive to those attending technical secondary schools, trying in this way to attract more students who wished to pursue a more vocational type of study, but at the same time were willing to continue their studies at a higher level. (Bouzakis, pp.112-115)

As far as the university-entrance examinations were concerned, the Ministry of Education in 1980 abolished the old system of "Cycles of Schools" and re-introduced the system of two-directions certificate mentioned above. There were two kinds of certificate (the participation in examinations was compulsory in order to graduate): one (Type A) for those wishing to study Humanities, and another for those who chose the "positive" track (Type B). The innovations of this system were the following:

- the subjects examined in the Type B examinations were now more related to the "applied" character of the respective scientific disciplines, in contrast to the previous similar system of 1965 where the dominance of the "liberal" studies was obvious.
- the examined matter was selected solely from the curriculum of the last year's curriculum.
- the selection of students for universities was made according to the preference of the candidates and their scores. The scores would determine whether a candidate would study in the more prestigious schools within the group that he or she selected.. The score was the weighted mean of the total of grades on their certificate, (second- year achievement + last-year achievement), their grades in composition in modern Greek, and in selective courses at the examinations multiplied by a different component for each school.
- the graduates of technical-vocational *lycea* could sit in the examinations if they had chosen the additional courses of the second (type B) group of electives.

The examinations were called "Panhellenic" (national) because they were taking place simultaneously throughout the country with common subjects selected by a special committee of the Ministry. The examination papers were marked by two secondary school teachers, and in case of a large disparity in their marks, the paper was re-evaluated.

Critical Assessment of the Reforms

The 1976-77 reform did not radically affect the "prestige" of the traditional "academic" subjects. The aim of the *lyceum* was quite similar to that of the upper level of the old 6-year gymnasium, in the sense that it was perceived as a preparatory stage to tertiary education, despite the official declarations that it meant "to provide an education that is

richer and broader than that of the gymnasium". (See Law 309/1976, article 29)

In assessing the 1976-77 reform, we must first summarise the major considerations embodied in the laws 309/1976 and 576/1977:

- The raising of the school-leaving age, which was a constitutional mandate (article 16 of the 1975 Greek Constitution), ranked as a very important precondition for the goals of democratisation and modernisation. Compared to other western societies, especially those of the European Economic Community, Greece had the fewest years of compulsory schooling (6 compared to 9 for most other countries).
- Selection through examinations at the end of compulsory schooling (age 15+), and the reorganisation of upper secondary education, would deflate the increasing bulge of aspirants for admission into the universities and other post-secondary institutions. At the same time, they would alleviate the problems of under-employment and psychological frustration.
- Related to the above was a desire to make the education system more efficient and capable of satisfying the economic needs of a "modernising" society.
- A strong wish to maintain control over educational standards, such as the attainment of certain levels of knowledge and the "screening" of the most "talented" for the few places that were--and still are-- of necessity available in the universities.
- The problem of language was bound to be solved, no matter how much delayed that change was. Among educational reformers, the "language question" was not merely an issue over what form of Greek should be taught in school. It represented basic differences in Greek social and educational philosophy. The introduction of the modern Greek language would help open up new cultural and intellectual horizons, those grounded in the contemporary socioeconomic needs of Greece; it would arouse pupils' interest in learning; and, ultimately, it would develop more versatile, responsible and democratic citizens.

Despite the declarations, the general *lyceum* kept the role of training the pupils only for the universities and providing general culture without any consideration for the labour market. The "shadow" of the entrance examinations to *lycea* affected the study of pupils and the curriculum balance in favour of modern Greek, mathematics, history and physics, that were conducive to their success in passing the examinations.

The arguments in favour of the economic benefit of education were applied only in the case of technical education. In this direction there have been relatively rapid changes. First of all, law 576/1977 abolished all the lower-secondary technical schools as uneconomic and unpopular and set the priorities for an extensive program of building construction throughout the country to meet the needs of a sound technical education provision. Thus, in parallel to the general *lyceum*, there was the technical *lyceum*--which, officially, granted its graduates the same status - and the technical school, representing earlier types of technical provision. The latter's existence revealed the financial stringency within which the reform attempts had to be implemented.

The main obstacle to vocational education was the reluctance of parents to accept non-traditional orientations for their children and the reluctance of pupils to abandon their dreams for a job in the public sector. Such attitudes were deeply rooted in their minds since, from as early as the 19th century, the school certificate (and later on the academic degree) had been inextricably linked to a kind of occupational security and social success. (Tsoukalas, 1977)

In general, it can be said that the reform efforts in the secondary stage, despite the big improvements they brought, lacked two things: a) proper timing, in the sense that the State

authorities tried after considerable delay to implement a number of changes, many of which could and should have been initiated decades ago (Bouzakis, 1986, pp.121-23), and b) the existence of adequate infrastructure and resources that could effectively support a "shift" to technical education. The conditions for the success of the new system were far below the very promising official rhetoric, especially as far as the training and continuous support of teachers responsible for teaching a new vocationally-oriented curriculum was concerned. The overwhelming majority of the three-year gymnasium still preferred the more prestigious *lyceum* path in even higher proportions than those witnessed heretofore. Thus, in the school-year 1976-77, 93.5% of the gymnasium graduates participated in the qualifying examinations to *lyceum* (general or technical) instead of applying for a place in the two-year technical-vocational school; in 1977-78, the figure was 97.2%(ibid., p.122)

In higher education, the most important aspect of the new system was the "homogeneity" that it brought, at least as far as the characteristics of the student population in each institute are concerned. More specifically, the abolition of the previous "cycles of schools", and the grouping of different disciplines resulted in:

- a very high proportion of candidates entering academic departments completely irrelevant to those that had been their initial choice; therefore many of them either were unsatisfied with their studies or decided to sit again the next year for the National Examinations;
- there seemed to be a kind of "social mixing" going on in the various academic departments, in the sense that now students coming from "lower" socioeconomic strata (e.g. the offspring of manual workers and peasants) gained-- often accidentally--a place to the prestigious disciplines of Technology, Law and Medicine, whereas in the past they were forced to choose one particular group ("cycle") of academic departments. (Papadimitriou, 1991, pp.120-123) In other words, a kind of "equalising" mechanism appeared to affect the distribution of the higher education places, especially in the universities, by allowing candidates with socially "inferior" backgrounds to attend courses previously dominated by the more "privileged" groups (civil servants, self-employed professionals etc.), although the reverse did not happen.

It is important here to stress the selection and credentialling role which examinations were called to perform in Greek education, in a period when the high social demand for general education and for university degrees was running against every attempt to control educational standards and output. Evidence of this demand was the increasing proportion of the entrees in the late seventies and early eighties--although it remained relatively low. In 1974, the number of entrees in higher education (Universities and KATEEs) was 16,025 in a total of 68,063 applicants (23.5%); in 1978, 21,375 out of 84,417 (25.3%); in 1981, 26,754 out of 75,206 (35.5%); and in 1982, 33,235 out of 78,708 (42.3%). (Katsikas, 1994:136) The need to screen the "intellectually most capable" for the few places that were of necessity available in the universities and other higher institutions (the prevailing principle was that of "meritocracy") was indisputable, but at the same time the highly selective procedure through which this was being achieved raised questions of "equity" and "social justice". Especially, educational opportunity within higher education was found to "favour" students with fathers at the highest levels of the occupational pyramid, and that was a conclusion derived not only by Greek researchers (Eliou, 1976; Drettakis, 1979; Milonas, 1982; Fragoudaki, 1985; Polydorides, 1984 and 1986), but also by international organisations like the OECD (1980).

Changes in the 1980s

Social and Educational Context

After the general elections in 1981, PASOK, the socialist party of the opposition--formed only 7 years earlier--came into the office.

One must not forget that the new government came to power in a period of radical sociopolitical and economic transformations. Apart from the first signs of the collapse of the "Eastern Block" in the mid- and late- eighties, Western Europe was experiencing an unprecedented movement for economic integration, through the EEC and its expansion southwards. Greece, as a new member of the EEC was being tantalised by problems of imbalances in the structure of the various sectors of the economy. Despite the fact that Greek per capita GDP jumped from one-quarter of the OECD average in the mid-fifties to almost one-half in 1979, it continued to have a narrow industrial base and a large inefficient agricultural sector, which accounted for 18% of GDP and 30% of employment in 1980. (OECD, 1993:14) At the same time, the country faced--due to the promising industrial growth of the sixties and early seventies--a dynamic internal migration. The urban population, from 43% of the total in 1961, went up to 58% in 1981. A dramatic shift in the distribution of the labour force showed a progressive decline in the primary (agricultural) sector, a decline, however, which favoured the non-productive tertiary (service) sector instead of the secondary one (industry and construction). The distribution of the labour force in 1961 was 53.8% in the primary sector, 19% in the secondary and 27.2% in the tertiary one; in 1981, the figures were 30.7%, 29% and 40.3%. (NSSG, 1961, 1981)

The general context of the policy of PASOK government was aimed at "national independence, the sovereignty of people, social liberation and the socialist transformation of society". (PASOK, 1981, p.13) Among the measures taken by the PASOK government was the reinforcement of compensatory education. A new institution of post-*lyceum* preparatory centres was established aimed at offering free training for the examinations on the selected subjects for all pupils. The aim of these public institutions was to provide tuition to the poor pupils who could not afford private tuition, and to reduce the inequalities of the private cost of exam preparation, especially in rural areas.

From as early as 1982, the entrance examinations to *lyceum* were abolished, and a new type of *lyceum* was introduced in 1984 at the post-compulsory level. This type was called "multilateral" *lyceum*, and it combined characteristics of the general and technical-vocational types. The direction of this school was the integration of general and vocational education, and the elimination of the "prejudice against manual work," the "offering of scientific and technological knowledge, and the methodology of acquiring this knowledge" and the "offering of equal opportunities to all young people, and helping pupils to become democratic citizens..." (Ministry of Education, 1987, pp.19-22).

The pupils in these schools had--and still have--a compulsory core curriculum at the first grade, with very little room for electives. At the second grade, they can choose one out of six "cycles" that are connected to some of the seventeen specialisations at the third grade. That means that one "cycle" in the second grade leads to various specialisations in the third grade. For example, Cycle 1: Man and Society leads to the following specialisations: either academic option 3 to the university faculties of Humanities and Law, or other vocational specialisations such as office tasks, librarians, computing, social services and applied arts". (Nikita, 1991, p.241) Thus, the options are built up and developed along with the grades. The fact that only at the third grade there are vocational specialisations similar to those of technical-vocational *lycea* justified the additional fourth year of practice in the specialities of some lines, such as agriculture, secretarial, car engineering and the like. (Ministry of Education, 1984, pp.839-46) The statistics, however, show that in 1989 only 400 out of 6,130 graduates (of multilateral schools) were attending the fourth year. (Ministry of

Education, 1991)

On the whole, the curriculum of this *lyceum* rather more resembles the curriculum of the general *lyceum*, with few additional subjects, than that of the technical- vocational curriculum. It seems--although there are no specific surveys of the balance between theory and practice in the vocational courses of these schools--that the new *lyceum* is rather an improved version of the general (academic) *lyceum*, with pre-vocational subjects at the first two grades, and theoretical vocational training at the final grade.

The technical schools, on the other hand remained "low- prestige" institutions throughout the eighties. According to various reports by the School Advisers (former Inspectors), technical education evidenced an "overlap between the specialisations" offered at the two-year schools and three-year *lycea*, the "old fashioned curriculum content" that lacked connection with production, and the complete absence of visiting or training of the students in industrial environment, so that the existing programs "do not prepare them for the labour market". (Nikta, 1991, p.108) These schools are mainly attended by boys, since the social division for women and men is still very strong, despite numerous campaigns initiated by the socialist government, during the eighties, to bring about gender equality. Kokos (1987) argued that the technical *lyceum* is the "refuge" of pupils from non-privileged social strata, who are forced to seek employment after 18.

The Greek experience showed that not only is the government to be blamed for this situation because of its reluctance to design better strategies and pay the real cost of vocational education, but also blame can be attributed to the high expectations that Greek families have towards general secondary and higher education. Job insecurity, exploitation by the employers, poor payment, bad conditions of work and the like, are societal factors that greatly affect their decisions, and credit general education with the highest prestige.

Examinations

The examination system itself has been changed in many ways. In 1983, a new "four-track" system was introduced; and, in 1988, the higher education entrance examinations were separated from the graduate certificate; in other words, pupils were no longer obliged to sit the examinations in order to graduate.

Those wishing to sit the examinations had--and still have--to attend one of four "tracks" (groups of specialisation):

1. the first one leads to university departments of Science and Technology and higher technological institutes, and the examined subjects are composition in modern Greek, mathematics, physics and chemistry.
2. the second one leads to medical and biological departments, and comprises the subjects of composition in modern Greek, physics, chemistry and biology.
3. the third one offers opportunities for entrance to departments like Philosophy, Law, Modern-ancient Literature, Education , and the subjects examined are composition in modern Greek, ancient Greek literature and language, latin and history.
4. the fourth branch leads to departments like Political Science, Economics, Administration, Sociology, and includes the subjects of composition in modern Greek, mathematics, history and sociology.

The new system did not wipe out the examinations to tertiary level as the socialist party had promised. It, nevertheless, offered a more rational distribution of higher education and a greater variety of channels as well as the chance of limitless attempts for the candidates. It also eliminated the stress of these crucial examinations from the secondary

grade of *lyceum*, since from 1988 in the calculation of the final score of the national examinations no more have the results of the first and second grade of *lyceum* to be taken into account, whereas in the period 1983-87 these results accounted for 25% of the total score. Thus, in the university-entrance examinations ("Genikes Exetasis", as they were named), each subject is examined on one and only day of the year, which is predetermined by the Ministry of Education. This change separated completely-- typically, because in essence the links have remained unbreakable--the performance of the students in high school and the national examinations, which caused criticism because it does not provide any incentive for greater school achievement, while it exposes the whole process of the assessment to various accidental factors (psychological stress, memorisation, luck, technical problems). On the other hand, the justification for that decision, as the government argued, was based on the effect that the examination process had on the curriculum and its (internal) assessment within the schools; it was argued more or less that a "distorted" kind of competition had been going on in the school classes between the students, something that also raised questions about "commercialisation" of the assessment system.

In the meantime, candidates competing for a place in the university schools increased three times between 1974 and 1986, while the number of those successful in entering only doubled.

The introduction in 1983 of the three-year Technological Education Institutes (TEIs), which replaced the KATEE, has been seen not only as an attempt to improve standards in the provision of higher technical and vocational knowledge, but also as a way of diminishing the trend toward greater competition in the university examinations. The reduction of chances and the stiff competition for university places forced the less successful applicants to turn towards the TEIs. While university has become more inaccessible for the majority of the secondary school graduates, the number of students entering TEIs has continued to increase.

The most important differences between TEIs and universities derive from their officially stated educational objectives. The TEIs aim to "provide education in the classroom and in the "real world" (laboratories, business, experimental fields, organisations and other public or private establishments linked with the TEIs) for technologists". (Kalamatianos et al, 1988, p.273) To achieve these objectives, TEIs run programs which lead to a first degree ("ptychio") after at least six semesters of classroom instruction, plus one or two additional semesters of practical training. Universities, on the other hand, offer programs which lead to a first--but not necessarily final-- degree (also called "ptychio") after eight semesters for all departments, except for engineering and dentistry which require 10 semesters, and for medicine which requires 12 semesters.

Despite the popularity that TEIs have gained during the last decade, there are still problems of "equitable" distribution of higher education places, on the one hand because the percentage of candidates accepted has remained low (about 18% of the total for universities, and 17% for TEIs), and on the other hand because many people still consider university places as "highly prestigious" in relation to the TEIs, and the allocation of their places "is very inequitable and favours high income groups" (Psacharopoulos & Papas, 1987 and 1993).

Selection and Educational Changes

The education reform attempts, as we have seen, have not been quite as bold and radical as one would expect in a country which, officially at least, belongs to the "West", and is considered as an "upper middle-income economy" by all the major international organisations. The move from goals and legislation to school outcomes was blocked by

political inertia and the fixed processes of Greek school in a period of decreasing economic growth and austere budgets. The constraints of the inherited institutions and the goal conflict between equality of opportunity and excellence should not be ignored. Despite the relative success of the reforms in expanding secondary education, the Greek schools are still plagued by drop-out rates, the lack of fit between curriculum and job requirements and inequalities in the distribution of educational opportunities.

Many of the innovations brought (mainly) by the governments of the 1970s and the 1980s did not create the necessary consensus among professional groups, political parties and education planners. The main innovation of the PASOK government, the "multilateral school", has not yet been expanded as expected, mainly because of the enormous financial and technical resources required, in a period of very stringent fiscal policies, implemented by the State in order to meet the criteria for the monetary unification of the European Union.

In addition, the monopoly on decision making by the top hierarchy of the Ministry of Education was--as it has been proved by this experience--the primary goal of the policy makers, and this was the framework in which the reform was initiated. Examples such as the central control of the content of the textbooks--and even of the teacher's manuals--or the changes of the educational hierarchies and priorities according to the changes of Minister, are very revealing of the intentions of past governments.

The historically established access of wide strata of the Greek population to university education has been hindered by the numerous *clausus* policy. It is important to stress the shift of public pressure for "equal opportunities" in access in educational provision, from the lower to the higher levels of the system. These changes ran parallel to general reforms in the organisation of schools, and responded to: i) a climate of political freedom and democratic changes that favoured a more "egalitarian" school structure, and ii) demands for alignment of the school functions with the needs of the developing Greek economy, i.e., the promotion and support of technical-vocational education, which has been neglected because of the highly selective examination system, and a dominant "academic" curriculum.

The old "classical" and "practical" orientations were reshaped in an effort to keep up with the radical changes in the socioeconomic conditions and technological advancements experienced throughout the so-called "developed world", part of which Greece has always struggled to be. The truth is that the Greek educational system has been dominated from the very beginning of the existence of the modern Greek State by a highly centralised structure, which enabled the governments and the various politically influential groups to impose organisational and financial restrictions on the "democratisation" of decision-making. At the same time, the orientation of the curriculum towards the "classical tradition", obviated for a very long time any possibility for introduction of broader and more balanced content based on modern pedagogical methods. Revealing of the conservatism characterising the curriculum policies during the last half century has been the prominent and persistent involvement of the School of Philosophy of the University of Athens in the planning and implementation of every major curricular change. Its members have repeatedly opposed every attempt at reform that would "deviate" from the "humanistic" type of education, prevailing in the Greek schools for decades. (Dimaras, 1975; Mattheou, 1980) The dominant ideology has always been that of "meritocracy"; the "few", the most "capable", the most "intelligent" could and should have access to the highest educational levels possible, and enjoy the privileges and social status that the most "prestigious" academic disciplines can secure.

The lack of adequate provision for technical and vocational education was only an indication of the wider weaknesses of the system, and the inequalities (re)produced by its existence. The very restricted access to higher levels of secondary, and later on university education must not be attributed only to the hostile attitude of the "traditionalist"

policy-makers toward the reforms, nor to the financial stringency and lack of resources; it must be searched for in the deep-rooted cultural values and principles of Greek society, which, subsequently, may reveal the relation between the dependent character of the country's economic structure and the sociopolitical context of its recent history. The educational mechanisms were designed and controlled by the State in every single detail. Thus, it seems reasonable for them to have served a dominant ideology that praised "non-manual" and "intellectual" work, and a labour market system where the only secure and well- paid job was that of the "white-collar" , public-sector employee. Job insecurity, exploitation by employers, low wages, bad conditions of work, are all societal factors that pushed--and continue to push--pupils toward the more advantageous public sector. The fact that the public sector has been the biggest employer of graduate labour in the past has had a great impact on the prestige of general secondary or university education, and the "inferiority" of technical-vocational education.

Thus, whereas in the past, winning a place in the upper- secondary school had been considered a success, in the last decade there has been a strong public pressure for "freer" access to the universities and the other institutes of higher education. But since places in higher education--given its "free-of-charge" character, and at the same time the restraints imposed by the State budgets--were limited, Greece has experienced a situation where the "demand" exceeded the "supply". This imbalance had--and still has--to be controlled by the system of the National Examinations.

Various studies have shown that the allocation of university places is very inequitable and favours high income groups, or groups with high social status. Even when the research findings claim that performance in the National Examinations--and subsequently success in entering the university--is not directly affected by the "family socioeconomic background", there is, nevertheless, always an indirect influence through various other factors.(Polydorides, 1995 a,b and 1996) Factors such as "curriculum track" or "attendance of private cramming institutes" underscore the influence that the family exercises on the choices made, on the one hand, and on the resources used for ensuring eventual success, on the other. The greater ability to finance preparatory classes and enter selective private schools, results in the finding that "...sons and daughters of managers, executives and professionals are four times as likely to enter the university on their first trial relative to the offsprings of manual workers". (Papas and Psacharopoulos, 1987, p.494)

Notes

1. The term is rather simplistic, and it is used purely for a minimum level of descriptive precision.
2. We should not forget her role as a founder member of the E.C., the EURATOM and the ECSC in the 1950s.
3. Indeed, the country's annual industrial production is among the highest in Europe, despite the wide disparities between North and South, and its long tradition of political instability.
4. Here we should note that all the following governments used the distribution of textbooks for strengthening control over knowledge.
5. The proportion of those occupied in the primary sector has diminished dramatically during the last 35 years. From about 54% in 1961, it fell to 29% in 1985, and 21% in 1994. At the same time, the figures for the secondary sector were 19%, 27% and 24%, and for the tertiary sector 27%, 44% and 55.5%, respectively.

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About the Author

Dionysius Gouvias Research and Graduate School
Faculty of Education
University of Manchester

Humanities Building
Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9PL

Email: mewxddg1@fs1.ed.man.ac.uk

I graduated (with a honour's degree) from the Department of Sociology of the University of Crete, Greece, in 1993. I did my masters' degree (University of Manchester, Faculty of Education) on "Educational Policy", between 1994 and 1995. I registered as a Ph.D. candidate in the Research and Graduate School of the Faculty of Education, University of Manchester, in September 1995.

During the last five years I have participated as a research assistant in two research projects on the socioeconomic transformation of certain regions in Greece. (These projects were funded by the Universities of Athens and Crete.) I participated in two Educational Conferences, one held in Athens (Greece), and one at the Birmingham University, School of Education, in 1996. My main research interests are inequalities in education (mostly in secondary), curriculum content, the relationship between educational policies and cultural settings, and between school and labour market structures.

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